



Closing of the 6th WORLD CONGRESS OF SALESIAN COOPERATORS

»Being yeast to be fruitful« - Rome 2 May 2024

Dear brothers and sisters, Salesian Cooperators; dear friends of the Salesian Family; dear young people among us:

It is an immense joy to have met you here in Rome for this 6th World Congress, in the heart of the Church and in the home of Don Bosco. We have come from five continents, from very different contexts, but with a single desire: to discern together how to be leaven in order to bear fruit in today's world.

This Congress is not just another event. It is a point of arrival that becomes a point of departure. It is a historic turning point. We have arrived here after a journey of listening, analysis, prayer, and discernment. We have looked realistically at our reality and have discovered something fundamental: the Association is alive, the charism is alive, and the world needs us more than ever.

1. Where We Come From

We are celebrating this Congress as part of the 150th anniversary of our Association. Don Bosco envisioned us as true Salesians in the world: laypeople passionate about Christ and young people, capable of transforming society from within, like the yeast that leavens the dough.

Today, as we look back on our history, we give thanks for the many co-workers who have been a light in their families, in their professions, in their parishes, and in their neighborhoods. Thanks to them, the Association has come this far with a strong, joyful, deeply human, and deeply evangelical charism.

2. Where We Are

An analysis of our eleven regions reveals a wounded, polarized, and unequal world; a world in which many young people experience uncertainty, loneliness, and a lack of reference points. It also reveals a Church in transition, seeking new languages, new structures, and new paths of synodality.

In this context, our Association is at a decisive moment. We have great strengths:

- a relevant and necessary charism,
- a vibrant presence in the peripheries,



- an Association that is a community that supports and accompanies,
- an admirable capacity for resilience.

But we also have vulnerabilities we cannot ignore:

- aging,
- a lack of generational renewal,
- an unclear vocational identity,
- inconsistent training,
- weak communication,
- a limited sociopolitical presence.

However, we are not here to complain about our weaknesses nor to boast of our strengths. We are here to discern, decide, and move forward.

3. Where do we want to go?

The Rector Major, over the past year and during these four days of the General Chapter, has reminded us of some essential keys for seeing, listening, choosing, and acting in the world we are called to live in and transform. Yesterday he spoke to us about:

- of humble listening, which arises from intimacy with God;
- the family spirit, which is communion projected into mission;
- a mission guided by the Spirit, who goes before us and leads us;
- of participation, which makes that communion and mission concrete.

Let us also recall the ideas that Fr. Fabio has been repeating to us for a year:

1. Having a clear identity for a clear proposal. We cannot accompany young people if we do not know who we are. We are consecrated lay people in the style of Don Bosco, called to live the Gospel in daily life.
2. Have a passion for young people. We cannot offer experiences that merely “pass the time,” but rather paths that open up a future, a vocation, and meaning.



3. Look at Don Bosco in truth. Not the convenient Don Bosco, but the real one: innovative, creative, bold, deeply human, and deeply of God.

These keys shed light on our motto: Be leaven to be fruitful. Yeast makes no noise, does not take center stage, does not impose itself. But it transforms from within. This is how we want to be in the world: discreet yet decisive, humble yet fruitful, small yet essential.

4. What do we want to build together

At this Congress, we wanted to dream of the Association of tomorrow. We will have time to draft, develop, and implement the programmatic guidelines, but allow me to highlight a few ideas:

(PRESENTATION OF PROGRAMATHIC GUIDELINES)

In the Congress proceedings, you will find all the detailed conclusions of the work done over these past few days. And in the coming months, the World Council will develop the approach for presenting, working on, adopting, and implementing these programmatic guidelines. Our 150th anniversary did not begin or end yesterday. Let us also celebrate the entire coming year in this spirit: let us put all these ideas into practice, as Fr. Fabio suggested yesterday in the fourth of the keys he presented to us.

Conclusion

We do not want to preserve the Association. We want to make it fruitful. We want to be the branches united to the Vine, to bear fruit, and fruit in abundance. We dream of an Association that is leaven in the dough of the world, that transforms without imposing itself, that illuminates without dazzling, that accompanies without intruding, that loves unconditionally.

Dear brothers and sisters: This Congress is not an end. It is a beginning. The world needs our joy. Young people need our presence. The Church needs our witness. The Salesian Family needs our creativity. And Don Bosco needs us now, not tomorrow. May this Congress be a Pentecost for the Association. May the Spirit make us a humble and fruitful leaven, so that the Kingdom may grow in the lives of young people, in our families, in our societies, and in our hearts.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Borja Pérez

World Coordinator